GUIDE TO THE OH4 AMBON FILE

[This file contains information on the people of the small island of Ambon, just south of Ceram, in the Central Moluccas. The file essentially contains only one source with bits of data from a few others. Ambon, settled by migrants from nearby western Ceram, has a long history of contact with the rest of the world (some 400 years) due to its part in the spice trade. It was and still is an important producer of cloves and nutmeg for export. First Islam and later Christianity, came to Ambon through the spice trade and the attempts of traders to gain control of the island's resources. Due to the missionizing activity of the Dutch, the people are highly acculturated to European ways and many Christian Ambonese have emigrated to other parts of the world. Their language is classed as Malayo-Polynesian, Ambon-Timor group. As of 1950, most spoke a mixture of Dutch and Malay. The population of Ambon is 80,100 (1959). The economy is based on swidden agriculture, which is limited by poor soils. Villages are located on the coast, with the average size about 1450 persons for Christian villages. The main foods are sago, tubers, vegetables and fish. Some rice is cultivated, but most is imported and is considered a luxury. Spices support the cash economy. Land is owned by clans and subclans. Descent is patrilineal, within named, exogamous kingroups. Residence used to be strongly patrilocal, but now tends to be neolocal after a year or 2 with the groom's family. This patrilocality produces households of more than one nuclear family. A brideprice of cloth, brandy, plates and sometimes cash is required even for elopements, which are now common. An endogamous aristocratic, ruling class, drawn from certain clans, holds most political power, but the civil administration, as well as Islam and Christianity, has weakened their hold. The indigenous religion has been "virtually obliterated" by contact with Islam and Christianity, but it did

survive until recent decades on Ceram. It appears to have included "village-oriented societies of adult males," which guaranteed life in an elite afterworld; and initiations involving ritual devourings by crocodiles, exclusion of women and the sacrifice of pigs, for boys at puberty. Headhunting seems to have been an important part of the religious ceremonies. (Data based on LeBar, 1972, Ethnic Groups of Insular Southeast Asia, Vol. I. pp. 116-118.)

The 116 slips for the sources used in this file will be found in the OB1 Indonesia file. 4: Kennedy is essentially the only source. It is an edited version of his field notes. This file contains only a basic descriptive ethnographic report of this unit. The file was processed in 1956.]